

## THE CHURCH ISSUE.

A sermon delivered in February, 1884, in Woodbury, Pa., on the "Church Issue," by request,

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[Reported by request.]

That Jesus Christ established a visible church on earth, is admitted by the Christian world. And the church that he organized consisted of a body of believers. And, as it is an established fact, that no body—whether ecclesiastical or political—can remain intact without a prescribed form of government, so Jesus Christ gave to his church a law of government. That law, emanating from a perfect Being, is, necessarily, a perfect law. That law given to us by Christ and his Apostles, denominated the New Testament Scriptures, is recognized by the Christian world as a perfect law. Then it being a perfect law, any additions, supplements, amendments, subtractions, to or from that law, are innovations, and condemned by the law. The Revelator plainly defines it in the last chapter (see verse 18, 19). That this law grants unto men and women liberty of conscience, and that, when men in council assembled enact laws, the enforcement of which is destructive of liberty and the higher rights of the governed, and when its laws are made mandatory—i. e. co-equal with the laws of Jesus Christ—is an assumption of power, dangerous in itself, an insult to the great Law giver, and manifests a spirit of anarchy and despotism. And that all creeds, dogmas, bulls and confessions that emanate from men are fallible, and dare not step between a member of the church of Christ and his law, and made a test of Christian fellowship, that when a member is inducted into the church of Christ, through the prescribed law of Christ, that that same law only can expel or excommunicate that member, and that alone for its violation. And that we arraign the Elders, or leaders of the German Baptist or Dunker church, with arrogating unto themselves power and authority of Jesus Christ. And in this assumption of power, have transcended their authority, and taken issue with the Psalmist when he says, "The law of the Lord is perfect."

They have established customs and usages that are as unwarranted by the Gospel, as the counting of beads, or absolute seclusion from the world, or doing penance by torturing the body. That it has centralized its power into the hands of its leaders, who sail under the cognomen of bishops, thus taking the power out of the hands of the church, and vesting it in their own hands, which is dangerous to all forms of popular government. That with this power arrogated unto themselves, by themselves, they have excommunicated ministers and lay members, men and women, without a single charge of immoral conduct, or a violation of the Gospel of Christ. Ministers have been expelled for preaching the Gospel of Christ, to those outside of the peculiar Dunker church. Thus taking issue with Christ himself, when he says, "Go ye into all the world and preach my Gospel." German Baptist committees virtually say, if you affiliate with any one outside of us, we'll excommunicate you. And they have done it. I stand before you to-night a victim of that doctrine, and of course the commission of Christ got me into trouble. Members of the German Baptist Church have been expelled, for recognizing and fellowshiping progressive brethren and sisters—that were expelled without a single charge of immorality—and for this Christian courtesy were also expelled. Members have been expelled for refusing to adopt a certain peculiar cut, or style of dress, thus taking issue with the apostle Peter when he says, "let it not be the putting on of apparel." Laws have been enacted compelling ministers to conform to a peculiar style of dress, and wearing the hair, or being debarred from acting in "Official" church matters, have been expelled without church trial. They have expelled sisters for the "heinous crime" (?) of wearing a hat; have driven sisters away from the communion table for wearing a five cent rouche; they have sent committees to inspect ministers' coats, and to report to the heads of the church, as to whether they were sufficiently rounded to be orthodox. It has given the sisters five weeks to lay off her plain hat, or be expelled from the church, and when asking the church for the Gospel that forbids it, and acting upon her personal liberty, continued to wear the hat, the ecclesiastical axe was lifted, and the sister was spiritually beheaded. In a neighboring church it is no sin, and the hat is tolerated, but in the church referred to, it was a sin, and the sister had to go.

Brethren that have been identified with and held official position in the church for twenty years, that are loved and respected by the community in which they have lived for forty years, have been ruthlessly hurled from the church, that only asked, that if guilty of conduct unbecoming a Christian, they

would step upon the balances of justice and be tried. Their requests were unheard, but declared expelled by three important bishops. And it being a universally accepted theory that no member is expelled from the Christian church, except for conduct unbecoming a Christian gentleman or lady, such actions may cast reflections upon personal character. The German Baptist church has locked its church houses against all other Christian denominations, thus declaring by its actions, that it would be desecrating their temples to allow ministers of other Christian denominations to preach in them, when other Christians have thrown open their churches, and they were always ready to accept them, thus taking issue with the Savior's language, "As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them." They have barred with wagon tire, and bolted their church doors against those who helped to build them, and who were once their brethren. And in violation of all rules of equity and common justice, refuse to refund their money, or allow them the privilege of worshipping in them, and thus take issue with the inspired prophet, "Do justly, and love mercy." And not only this, but have arrested brethren for going into the churches they helped to build, for the purpose of worshipping God, and in the face of all this proclaim mightily from the housetops, the doctrine of non-resistance.

Brother H. R. Holsinger has been elected the "Jeroboam" of the Dunkard church, and as the sower who went forth to sow, but the seed he sowed, was the seed of discord and schism. He has been branded an infidel to his church, and did not the laws of the land protect him, the feeling toward him would perhaps have driven him, or banished him as an exile. Yet he stands to-day, with a character unimpeached by his enemies—only that he's a "pestilent fellow." The missiles of persecution have been hurled against him for the past decade. He has been arraigned time and again before the august tribunal of Dunkard orthodoxy for innovations, and I am prepared to prove—and will do so—that the innovations with which he was charged, have been and are adopted, and accepted, by the German Baptist church to-day, and that "honor to whom honor is due," was not given him, but his rights were usurped by others.

In the year of our Lord, 1869, H. R. Holsinger was editor of the "Christian Family Companion." In that year the German Baptist annual meeting was held in Virginia. Holsinger, realizing the wants of the church, took with him a stenographer, in order to procure a stenographic report of the Conference. Through the kind providence of God Holsinger and his reporter reached the conference, but when they arrived, the Sanhedrim had been apprised of the fact, and the edict had gone forth,—"No reporter here."—innovation! Brother H. sent his reporter home at his own expense, and was reprimanded for his departure. How is it to-day? Can't hold annual meeting without a reporter, and Quinter & Brumbaugh Bros. are reaping the spoils.

Some years ago brother Holsinger saw the necessity for improving church music, and suggested that a hymnal be arranged "with notes," the cry at once arose, Innovation! away with this pestilent fellow, that Holsinger ought to be put out of the church for attempting to get up a hymn book with notes; and of course Henry was asked to make another confession. Well, how is it to-day? Why Quinter and Brumbaugh Bros. have a monopoly of the hymn book business, and strongly urge every congregation to supply itself well with hymnals, as it adds to the worship?

Brother Holsinger was impressed with the necessity of schools, and educated ministry, he introduced it in some of the district meetings, and such a volley of righteous indignation as he received was astounding. Another terrible innovation! Henry again asked to make a confession. How is it to-day? Three colleges loom heavenward as monuments to the memory of H. R. Holsinger.

A few years ago brother H. felt the necessity of a reformation within the Dunker Church. Not in its Gospel principles, but in its methods, its customs and usages. He, with many others saw the threatening danger of centralization of power, he saw with others that a few ambitious, authority-loving bishops for years in succession have controlled the church, met in annual council, created the same stereotyped standing committee, that there was strife and even trickery among them to obtain the high seats in the synagogue; a hungering and thirsting, not after righteous, but after eminence and power was plainly manifest. The result of all this was that material was crammed into the annual meeting mill, and "customs and usages" were ground out to that extent, and enforced upon the necks of its members, until they became obnoxious, and "greivous to be borne."

Among the thousand-and-one of the trifling and disgusting "customs and usages" that came from the mill, was the three modes of wearing the hair. The circumstances under which this law was enacted was as follows, to wit: At an annual meeting three bishops were appointed a committee on the wearing of the hair. These three bishops wore their hair in as many different ways, and all three being orthodox, they agreed that either of the modes would be admissible, and brought in their report accordingly and it was accepted and confirmed. This trifling legislation, called loudly for reform. H. R. Holsinger mounted the rostrum, and unfurled the banner of religious liberty, became editor of the "Progressive Christian," declared a free rostrum, and began the exposure of sin in high places. The camp of Israel became disturbed. An Achan was among them, and must be stoned to death or Israel can't prosper. Charges were brought against him from all quarters. I was present at the annual meeting in Virginia, in '79, when bundles of charges were brought against him, charging him with heresy. Not Gospel heresy, but with heresy against customs and usages, and church machinery. Brother H. recanted and took it back.

In 1881 the annual meeting sent five bishops as a committee to visit brother H. at Berlin, Pa., while he presided over the Berlin church. Specified charges were brought against him by annual meeting for publishing articles of discord, and writing against "customs and usages" of the church. This committee was sent to try him upon the charges preferred, and nothing else. Brother Holsinger submitted the matter to his church. The church said, "You have been openly charged, and you shall be openly tried." When the committee came, they said, No! we'll try you according to the "customs and usages" of the church—in secret council. Brother H. was willing to have his Christian character investigated as it had been assailed—publicly, which was only to say the least, reasonable and fair. But the committee said, we'll try you in secret council, or not at all. The Savior says, "In secret I have said nothing." In the fact that Holsinger, sustained by his church, demanded an open trial, the five bishops retired to their council chamber, and returned with a verdict something like this, "Inasmuch as H. R. Holsinger refuses to be tried according to the 'customs and usages' of the church, he is therefore expelled from the church." Not on account of the preferred charges, because he was not tried as he was charged, in open and public investigation. The committee retired from the field with the verdict in their gripsacks, until annual meeting of 1882, when it was presented for ratification. Strong and able men opposed its endorsement, because of its injustice and unfairness, because he had not been tried upon the charges brought against him. Men plead and wept because of its injustice. Rather than see the church rent in twain, brother Holsinger, through his friends, tendered the olive branch of peace, and only asked for an armistice, or suspension of action for twenty-four hours. But no! the wise bishop Saylor, of Maryland, says, "the committee must be sustained: Its character must be vindicated." Judgment was meted out, and brother Holsinger ruthlessly expelled from the church, a gag law at once enacted to close the mouths of those who disapproved the unjust action, and dared to speak against it. Brother Holsinger with a little hand full of friends withdrew, and held a consultation, deciding to make one more overture for reconciliation. Their proposition suggested the appointing of a committee from both sides, to talk over the situation. When brethren Beer, Bailey and Roop presented the petition before that august body, (the standing committee), they, with their proposition, were treated with derision and scorn, and with the reply that their paper had not come through the prescribed course, which meant that it had not come through district meeting. (When at the same time a progressive sympathizer could not have got a hearing at a district meeting.) This should finally and forever settle the false accusation that we "left the church," when overtures of peace were treated with indifference. The brethren sent upon this mission of peace, plead to be heard, but were treated coldly and indifferently. Strong men wept over the cold rejection, being driven away from those they loved, and recognized as brethren. The dove had flown to the window, but was driven away, to seek refuge elsewhere. What must be done? What could be done? Brethren and sisters without a church home!!

Yonder stands a school house, let us repair thither and talk it over. A few brethren and sisters wended their way in silence to the little school house. They entered it with uncovered heads, they kneel before the Great Shepherd, they appeal in audible and silent prayer to Elijah's God, who heareth the young

ravens when they cry; who surrounded the lonely shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem. The response came to those fervent prayers, "Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." They talked over the situation; we must do something; many precious souls have been turned out of the fold, and driven away into the mountains. They then and there agreed to call a convention on the 29th of June, 1882, at Ashland, Ohio. Among the historic places to be sacredly remembered by generation yet unborn, will be the school house, where assembled the little band of pilgrims, to bring their prayers and saddened hearts to the great God of the Universe, driven away from their church home, they seek refuge under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty. Around that little nucleus of pilgrims, has gathered a church that numbers its thousands, that if they live faithful to Christ, will share a seat at the right hand of their Father in Heaven, and enjoy that rest promised to all his faithful children.

On the 29th day of June, 1882, a number of representative brethren assembled at Ashland, Ohio, and after deliberating upon the situation, promulgated what is denominated "Declaration of principles," and from those principles I quote to you, verbatim, a single paragraph that I regard as alone being sufficiently orthodox upon which to erect a Christian church, because it contains the vital principles of the Christian religion, as follows: "We hold that in religion the Gospel of Christ, and the Gospel alone is a sufficient rule of faith and practice. That he that adds to the Gospel, takes from it, or in any way binds upon men anything different from the Gospel, is an infidel to the author of Christianity, and a usurper of Gospel rights." This declaration of principles was promulgated, and the convention adjourned, looking forward to next annual meeting, with yet some ray of hope for reconciliation. Although the expelling machine, inaugurated and set in motion by the annual meeting, was doing its fatal work, those denominated progressive ministers were going on in the even tenor of their way, preaching Christ to sinners. Men and women believed and being baptized.

The annual meeting of 1883 assembled and with it assembled its apologists and defenders. Brother Holsinger had the moral courage to go away out to Bismark, Kansas, to attend it, hopeful, even yet, that a reconciliation might be effected, and this amidst the opposition of his friends. The meeting organized, the great standing committee to the front. Holsinger was somewhere waiting for the dove to bear to him the olive branch of peace. Soon it came, but alas! transformed from the beautiful dove, to the ugly vulture, bearing to him the Romish mandate, fresh from the hands of its enactors, "that all those that have been baptized into the body of Christ by Progressive ministers must be re-baptized before they can enter the German Baptist church. Thousands of Christian hearts were crushed with disappointment. And I want to say right here, in justice to one of the aged bishops that strongly defended this most unreasonable and unchristian dogma—re-baptism—that he has since repented, and has said through the public press, that upon that occasion his zeal ran away with his better judgment, or words of similar import. And so I think there is hope for him. I refer to Bishop Saylor.

All hopes of an amicable adjustment were now ended, the last straw had been placed upon the camel's back and broke it, and now something must be done. A convention was called at Dayton, Ohio. June 6th, 1883, that body in mass in convention declared itself free from church mandatory law, accepted the Gospel of Christ as its only rule of faith and practice, and as affirmed by Alexander Mack, in the year 1708, procured a church charter, and denominated itself the "Brethren" church.

We have now given a brief synopsis of the primary causes that led to a disruption of the once great and united Brotherhood denominated "Dunkards." We now proceed to enter into a brief recapitulation, embracing departures innovations, assumption of power on the part of the leaders of the German Baptist church, that are antagonistic with the Gospel and the founder of the church.

1st. They have departed from the principles, as affirmed by Alexander Mack the founder of the church upon the Gospel alone. The German Baptist church has to-day a larger code of laws and church discipline than the Gospel itself, or any other Christian church extant. Alexander Mack recognized no law as mandatory, save the law of Christ. German Baptists recognize their own laws as mandatory, because they have such. The German Baptist church is not the "Brethren" church. It forfeited the name "Brethren" church in 1836 through its own conference, in assuming the name "German Baptist," the